

In *Kant and the demands of self-consciousness*, Pierre Keller examines Kant's theory of self-consciousness and argues that it succeeds in explaining how both subjective and objective experience are possible. Previous interpretations of Kant's theory have held that he treats all self-consciousness as knowledge of objective states of affairs, and also, often, that self-consciousness can be interpreted as knowledge of personal identity. By contrast, Keller argues for a new understanding of Kant's conception of self-consciousness as the capacity to abstract not only from what one happens to be experiencing, but also from one's own personal identity. By developing this new interpretation, Keller is able to argue that transcendental self-consciousness underwrites a general theory of objectivity and subjectivity at the same time.

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KANT AND THE DEMANDS OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth *Critique*), Kant draws a famous but elusive distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception. He interprets the distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception as a distinction between transcendental and empirical self-consciousness. He argues that empirical self-consciousness is parasitic on transcendental self-consciousness, and that any empirical consciousness that has any cognitive relevance for us depends for its cognitive content on its potential relation to transcendental self-consciousness. These are strong, but, I want to argue, defensible claims once one understands the nature of transcendental self-consciousness, as it is understood by Kant.

The central aim of this book is to provide a new understanding of the notion of transcendental self-consciousness and show its implications for an understanding of experience. I develop and defend Kant's central thesis that self-consciousness puts demands on experience that make it possible for us to integrate our various experiences into a single comprehensive, objective, spatio-temporal point of view. My interpretation of his conception of self-consciousness as the capacity to abstract not only from what one happens to be experiencing, but also from one's own personal identity, while giving content to whatever one represents, shows how transcendental self-consciousness underwrites a general theory of objectivity and subjectivity at the same time.

The leading interpretations seem to be in broad agreement that Kant's notion of transcendental apperception is largely a disappointing failure. Perhaps the dominant tendency has been to dismiss his notion of transcendental self-consciousness as at best implausible and at worst incoherent. But even those interpreters who have been sympathetic to the notion of transcendental self-consciousness have endeavored to give it an anodyne interpretation that renders it largely irrelevant to a defense of objectivity or even subjectivity. By simply identifying transcendental

self-consciousness with objective experience, those interpreters deprive transcendental self-consciousness of any substantive role in justifying the claim that our experience is at least sometimes objective, and make it difficult to understand how it could sometimes be merely subjective.

It is not surprising that interpreters have had their problems with transcendental self-consciousness, despite the fact that it is undeniably a central notion in Kant's philosophy. Part of the problem is that Kant's notion of transcendental self-consciousness requires a subject of self-consciousness that is somehow distinct from any subject that we can experience. The only kind of subject that we seem to be acquainted with in any sense is a subject that we can experience, an empirical subject, and so the notion of a non-empirical subject that we could become conscious of seems to be based on an illegitimate abstraction from actual experience.¹ And, even if one concedes that it might be possible to be conscious of a non-empirical subject of experience, it seems that the only way we have of making sense of such a subject is by thinking of it as a mere abstraction from actual experience, in which case it is difficult to see how it could support any substantive claims about what the nature of experience must be.

Skepticism about whether it is possible to be conscious of a subject of thought that is somehow distinguishable from the kind of subject that is knowable through experience leads interpreters to look to consciousness of personal identity as the only kind of consciousness of self that we have.² Commentators who have resisted the tendency to collapse transcendental self-consciousness into consciousness of personal identity have often gone to the other extreme of treating all self-consciousness as a consciousness of judgments that are objectively valid, thus denying that transcendental self-consciousness is a necessary condition for consciousness of one's subjective point of view.³ And even those commentators who have tried to conceive of transcendental self-consciousness as a necessary condition of empirical self-consciousness have not had much to say about how transcendental self-consciousness could be involved in empirical self-consciousness.⁴

I claim that Kant's notion of transcendental self-consciousness is more robust than it has generally been thought to be, but also more commonsensical than most commentators have allowed it to be. I argue that the key to a proper understanding of the thesis that our experience is subject to the demands of self-consciousness is a proper understanding of the fundamentally impersonal character of our representation of self. We have an impersonal or transpersonal representation of self which is

expressed in our use of the expression “I” to refer to ourselves. When each of us refers to him- or herself by means of the expression “I,” each of us refers to him- or herself in a way that could, in principle, apply to any one of us. This is the basic, minimal, idea that Kant tries to express with his notion of transcendental self-consciousness.

I attribute to Kant and defend several further claims about transcendental self-consciousness that are very controversial. I claim that empirical or personal self-consciousness is parasitic on transcendental or impersonal self-consciousness. I argue that this amounts to the claim that we are only able to grasp our own individual identity by contrast with other possible lives that we might have led. Then I argue that our very ability to form concepts in general is based on our capacity for transcendental self-consciousness. This capacity for concept formation and use is displayed in judgments and inferences that themselves depend on our capacity for representing ourselves impersonally. I then go on to make the even stronger claim that the very notion of a representational content that has any cognitive relevance is parasitic on our ability to form an impersonal consciousness of self. Thus, even representations of the world and the self that are independent of thought, representations that Kant refers to as intuitions, have cognitive relevance for us only insofar as we are able to take them as potential candidates for I thoughts. This claim is the ultimate basis for the Kantian thesis that experience is only intelligible to us to the extent that it is a potential content of impersonal self-consciousness that is systematically linked to other potential contents. It is also the basis for his famous thesis that there are non-empirical conditions on all experience.

For Kant, non-empirical conditions on all experience are conditions under which a self-conscious being is able to represent itself in any arbitrary experience as the numerically identical point of view. This representation of the self-consciousness as a numerically identical point of view through different experiences connects different experiences together in a single possible representation. This representation of the self is the same regardless of the different standpoints within experience that the self-conscious individual might be occupying. In this way, the conditions governing the representation of the numerical identity of the self provide one with constraints on the way that any objective experience must be. And, insofar as these constraints also operate on one’s representation of one’s personal identity as constituted by a certain sequence of points of view within experience, they also provide the basis for an account of subjectivity.

IMPERSONAL AND PERSONAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Personal self-consciousness involves an awareness of the distinction between me and my representations and other persons and their representations. In order for me to have some understanding of the distinction between me and my representations, and other persons and their representations, I must have some way of comparing and contrasting my identity as a person with a certain set of representations with that of other possible persons with their own distinctive sets of representations.⁵ In order to be able to compare and contrast my representations with those of other persons, I must be able to abstract from the particular identity, the particular set of beliefs and desires, that distinguishes me from other persons. For I must be able to represent what it would be like for me had I had a different set of representations than the ones that I actually ascribe to myself:

It is obvious that: if one wants to represent a thinking being, one must put oneself in its place, and place one's own subject under the object that one wants to consider (which is not the case in any other kind of investigation), and that we can only require an absolute unity of a subject for a thought because one could not otherwise say: I think (the manifold in a representation). (A 354)*

The fact that I am able to represent the point of view of another rational being does not mean that I am no longer the particular individual that I am. But it does mean that I represent myself and other persons in an impersonal manner. For, in representing what it might have been like for things to appear to me in the way that they appear to the other being to which I wish to attribute rationality, I represent myself as an arbitrary self-consciousness, that is, just one person among many possible other persons. But at the same time I am also able to represent myself as the particular individual who I happen to be. For it is only in this way that I can compare the representations that I might have had from the point of view of another rational being with the representations that I have from my own actual point of view.

If I come to have doubts about the states that I am ascribing to myself, or if someone else challenges me concerning my past, I will feel the need to consider the possibility that I might be mistaken in what states I think

* References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth *Critique*) will be to the pagination of the first and second editions of the *Critique* indicated by the letters A and B respectively. I follow the text edited by Raymund Schmidt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1930) except where otherwise noted. All other citations of Kant's work are based on the volume and page numbers of the critical edition published by the Prussian Academy of Sciences and later by the German Academy of Sciences (henceforth Ak.) (Berlin: de Gruyter: 1990–). Translations are mine throughout.

belong to my own history and even in who I am. I can only do so to the extent that I am able to abstract from my actual personal identity, and evaluate the reasons for ascribing certain states to myself in a manner that would have weight for other persons as well. Thus, in order for each of us to understand what it is to be a person with beliefs, emotions, and desires, we must have an understanding of what it might have been like to have a different set of beliefs, emotions, and desires. The possibility of the point of view that we must take in order to go through these alternative sets of beliefs, emotions, and desires gives self-consciousness its transcendental dimension, that is, it makes self-consciousness a condition under which we can recognize an object that is distinct from our individual momentary representations of the world.

We can refer to the self that functions as a variable in self-consciousness as the transcendental self:

We presuppose nothing other than the simple and in itself completely empty of content representation: **I**; of which one cannot even say that it is a concept, but rather a mere consciousness, that accompanies all concepts. Through this I, or he, or it (the thing) that thinks nothing other than a transcendental subject = x is represented. This transcendental subject is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates. (A 345–346/B 404)

It might seem that the idea of a transcendental self commits one to a featureless *bearer* of experience. But the dummy sortal x that stands in for different individual constants would be misunderstood if taken to mean that when we represent ourselves by means of I thoughts we are then mere bare particulars, or egos bare of any properties that one could come to know through experience. The notion of a transpersonal and standpoint-neutral bearer of experience would be incoherent. In order to be able to represent something, it would have to have some kind of standpoint from which it represents things or at least some determinate set of capacities with which it represents, but, in order to be a transpersonal and standpoint-neutral subject, it would have to have no properties in particular.

Fortunately, Kant does not think of the subject of transcendental self-consciousness as a particular that has no particular properties, although he thinks that this is a view to which Descartes was attracted in trying to infer substantial properties of thinking beings in general from the conditions under which we ascribe thoughts. For Kant, transcendental self-consciousness is a representation of oneself that abstracts from what distinguishes one from other persons, not a representation of a bare particular:

It means a something in general (transcendental subject) the representation of which must indeed be simple, precisely for this reason, since nothing is determined with respect to it, for certainly nothing simpler can be represented than the concept of a mere something. The simplicity of the representation of a subject is not therefore a cognition of the simplicity of the subject itself, for one has completely abstracted from its properties, when it is merely designated by the completely empty of content expression: I think (which I can apply to any thinking subject). (A 356)

While I represent myself in a simple way when I represent myself by the expression “I” or by means of the expression “I think,” and even represent other thinkers simply when I represent them as individuals that can potentially say of themselves “I think,” it would be a mistake to infer from this that the ego that is the bearer of such I thoughts must itself be a simple individual or bare particular.

IMPERSONAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT

The kind of self-consciousness expressed by the statement “I think p,” where p is any proposition, is, for Kant, the basis for all use of concepts, judgments, and inferences. In using concepts, and making judgments and inferences, we commit ourselves to a representation of what we are representing by means of our concepts, judgments, or inferences that is not just true for our own individual point of view, but is also true for any arbitrary point of view. Kant refers to this notion of a representation that is a representation for any arbitrary point of view as a representation that belongs to “a consciousness in general” (*Bewußtsein überhaupt*), as opposed to a representation that belongs to one consciousness alone.

Now Kant does not wish to argue that there are representations that do not belong to the individual consciousness of distinct individuals. His claim is rather that we understand what we are representing when we are able to represent the content of representations that belong to our individual consciousness in a way that, in principle, is also accessible to other representers. The capacity to represent individual representations in this manner that is accessible to other representers is just what Kant regards as the capacity to use concepts. The capacity to use concepts is, in turn, exhibited in the ability to make judgments that have determinable truth value, and to draw inferences on the basis of those judgments that we can determine to be correct or incorrect.

In judgment, we may entertain the possibility that something is the case, but we also commit ourselves to the assumption that what we judge

is or is not the case. This commitment expresses itself in a willingness to offer reasons for our belief that something is or is not thus and such. In taking on the obligation to offer reasons for what we judge to be the case, we acknowledge that judgment is governed by normative principles. These normative principles are based on the commitment to truth that one takes on when one makes a judgment. Normative principles provide procedures for distinguishing judgment that succeeds in articulating truth from judgment that is false. These procedures may be articulated in the form of rules governing the behavior of individuals. The norms governing representation express themselves in terms of rules concerning when to token a certain representation if we are to succeed in articulating some truth. Our competence in judgment is then measured against our ability to express truths by means of the judgments that we make.

Judgment actually presupposes both the kind of personal self-consciousness that Kant refers to as empirical apperception and the impersonal self-consciousness that he refers to as transcendental apperception. Judgment presupposes personal self-consciousness insofar as judgment involves an implicit or explicit commitment on the part of the person who forms the judgment that things are thus and such for him, her, or it. At the same time, judgment also presupposes an impersonal self-consciousness, for when one makes a judgment one makes an assertion to the effect that things are thus and such not only for one as the particular individual that one is, but that, in principle, things should be taken as thus and such by anyone.

At least some implicit consciousness of self is built into the normative commitment that a judge takes on for her-, him-, or itself. To judge is to place oneself in the space of reasons and thus to take on a commitment to offer reasons for what one judges to be the case. But this means that, in making a judgment, the judge implicitly takes her-, him-, or itself to be not just conforming to rules but also tacitly or overtly obeying rules. Kant links the capacity for obeying rules that we display in our ability to use concepts to pick out and characterize objects not only with our capacity for judgment, but also with our capacity for self-consciousness. To have an idea that an individual is obeying rather than merely conforming to norms of which s/he has no implicit or explicit understanding, we must regard her or his point of view as one that we might be able to occupy in obeying the rules that we do. This is just to attribute the capacity for self-consciousness to those creatures.

Bona fide norms must be principles that the individual can come to

understand as the basis for his or her behavior, and they must be principles that the individual can come to see him- or herself as having chosen to be bound by in his or her behavior. Such capacity for choice is what Kant refers to as “spontaneity.” He regards it as a distinctive feature of rational and hence self-conscious beings. Such creatures are rational because they can assume responsibility for their own representations. It is this capacity to take responsibility that is the basis for their possession of full-fledged beliefs. To have full-fledged beliefs, one must be able to take something to be true. And, in order to be able to take something to be true, one must be able to form one’s belief in accordance with norms that licence one to take as true what one takes as true.

In forming a judgment, the individual is not merely stating a fact about the way that individual interprets matters, the individual is also making a claim that others ought to interpret things in the same way. The individual is thus committing him-, her-, or itself to the possibility of providing reasons for why he, she, or it has judged in that way rather than in another way. These reasons operate as norms governing the judgments in question. Norms are principles governing the responses of individuals that apply to individuals in different situations.

Now it has often been claimed that normativity could stop at the level of what a certain group or community takes to be true. While a view of normativity that stops at the group allows for a shared communal point of view relative to which individuals could be said to be right or wrong, it fails to address the implicit claim of the group or community to articulate standards that hold for them not because they are the ones that they do use but because those standards are the correct ones to adopt. A conflict of belief or values between different communities is only intelligible if the respective communities take themselves to be committed to something that is not merely true or of value for them. Even if these different communities see no way of establishing the validity of their own point of view to the satisfaction of the other point of view, they still must recognize the possibility of some encompassing perspective from which their own view, in principle, could be justified. Thus, the normative commitment to truth requires the possibility of an impersonal point of view, even if the point of view in question is not one that is ever actually held by any person or group of persons.

Generalizing the point, we may say that, in order for one to be able to recognize norms as norms governing one’s behavior, one must be able to recognize principles that transcend a particular point of view. These principles that transcend a particular point of view depend on one’s

ability to recognize not only one's own point of view, but also the possibility of other points of view to which those norms apply. For this, one must have some understanding of what it would be like to be an individual with such a distinct point of view governed by norms. But, in order for one to be able to represent the possibility of another point of view that is subject to the same principles to which one's own point of view is subject, one must be able to abstract from what is distinctive about one's own point of view. One must be able to place oneself in thought or imagination in the position of another and reflect on what things would be like from that alternative standpoint.

The self-consciousness expressed by the proposition "I think" provides each of us with an impersonal or, rather, transpersonal perspective from which we are able to consider ourselves and others. The transpersonal perspective is just the way that we represent our own activities as particular individuals to the extent that those activities are constrained by norms that apply to absolutely all of us. These norms place us in the space of reasons. This is why Kant insists that our only grip on the notion of a rational being is through our ability to place ourselves in the position of another creature. We are able to do this through the abstract representation of self that we have in the self-consciousness expressed by the proposition "I think."

OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

My task in this book is first to show how Kant understands the notion of transcendental self-consciousness. In the process, I distinguish his understanding of this notion from the understanding of it provided by other commentators. Then I develop the implications for an understanding of the general structure of experience that are inherent in the notion of transcendental self-consciousness. I focus on the role that transcendental self-consciousness has in connecting different spatial and temporal episodes together in a single experience. This experience is distinctive in that it is not the private experience of an individual, but, in principle, is accessible to absolutely all of us. To clarify Kant's conception of transcendental self-consciousness, I begin with a discussion of the texts in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant first articulates the notion of self-consciousness.

Kant introduces his distinction between empirical and non-empirical self-consciousness in the first edition of the Transcendental Deduction as a way of arguing for the claim that we have non-empirical concepts

that may legitimately be applied to experience. In the A-Deduction, Kant tries to establish that all contents of experience depend for their very existence on the possibility of connecting them together in a representation of self that is neutral with respect to the different contents of experience. He argues that this is only possible to the extent to which such contents of experience are subject to rules that connect those representations together independently of experience. He refers to these rules governing the possibility of an impersonal representation of self as the categories of the pure understanding. The Transcendental Deduction is concerned with proving that such rules are *bona fide* rules in that they must actually apply to all experience. In proving that there are necessary and universally applicable rules governing experience, the Deduction also provides a defense of objectivity. For such rules allow us to form judgments about the objects of experience that must be true not just for me or you, but for anyone.

In the next chapter, I argue that the notion of transcendental apperception that is introduced in the A-Deduction is not to be understood as a representation of personal identity. Instead, it is to be understood as a condition under which it is possible for us to form concepts of objects. As such, it is a representation of self that is the same for all of us. I criticize contemporary interpretations of transcendental self-consciousness as a kind of *a priori* certainty of personal identity, and argue that Kant was not concerned with providing a direct response to Hume's worries about personal identity. Instead, Kant introduces his impersonal consciousness of self as a condition for the formation of concepts of experience. I argue that the success of this argument depends on conceiving of concept use and representation in general as representing the world in a way that is the same for all individuals and that is also inherently systematic.

We represent items against a background of other representations that give those representations their distinctive content. If representations are to belong together in an impersonal self-consciousness, they must be connectable according to rules that allow us to represent ourselves as having the same point of view irrespective of the differences in representational content that distinguish those representations from each other. These rules have a cognitive content that is the same for all of us under all circumstances because that cognitive content is determined by the inherently systematic and standpoint-neutral notion of functional role in judgment and inference.

A number of contemporary interpreters have understood Kant to be

a functionalist about the self and the mind. I argue that Kant can only be regarded as a functionalist in a very circumspect sense; he is concerned with cognitive content as constituted by the functional role of such content in judgment and inference. Thus, unlike most contemporary functionalists, and *contra* most functionalist interpretations of Kant, I argue that Kant only regards the mind as a functional system with respect to the contribution of the active, spontaneous, aspect of the mind, rather than with its passive dependence on causal relations between representational contents.

In chapter three, I argue that Kant's conception of the point of view from which content is to be ascribed is based on his rejection of Hume's fundamental assumption that experience consists only of similarity relations between numerically distinct perceivings. Kant argues that the possibility of being conscious of one's self-identity as a self-conscious being is the basis for any conceptual recognition. He also plausibly argues that conceptual recognition of an object must be possible if any significant similarity relations are to be discerned. Without self-consciousness one would not be able to distinguish a successful from an unsuccessful recognition of an item by means of a concept, for one would have no conception of the possibility that the item might present itself to oneself in a way that is other than it is. And, without the possibility of distinguishing unsuccessful from successful recognition, there would be no basis for claiming that one had picked out relevant similarities in experience either.

The associationist conception of experience developed by British empiricism depends on the idea that we can have a brute recognition of similarities without any underlying capacity for representing our identity as thinkers. I argue that Kant was right that this idea of brute recognition will not work. The postulation of a brute capacity for recognition fails to do justice to the normative character of recognition, that is, that recognition can be successful or unsuccessful. Our associations cannot be completely random if they are to account for our awareness of any regularities in experience.

I note that there are first-order rules that allow us to compare and contrast various perceptual representations and represent them in a standpoint-neutral way. These rules are what Kant calls empirical concepts. There are also, however, second-order non-empirical concepts that make it possible for us to form empirical concepts. These second-order concepts dictate that nature must have the kind of uniformity that allows one to connect distinct representations together in

one possible self-conscious experience. They are what Kant refers to as the categories. The categories are sufficient to establish a general uniformity in nature. But they do not tell us what particular form such uniformity must take. They do not tell us which particular laws nature must obey.

This is why our ability to apply second-order concepts or categories to experience is governed by still higher-order concepts, which Kant refers to as ideas of reason. Such ideas of reason project a certain kind of systematic unity onto the whole of nature and thus allow us to identify the particular forms of regularity required for the formation of particular empirical concepts. We apply concepts to experience in ways that always involve some implicit commitments to how other concepts are to be understood. It is only through such systematic representational commitments that we are able to distinguish representations that are true of their objects from those that are not. For our only grip on objects that are independent of us is through our capacity systematically to apply the concepts that we have to experience. We have this capacity systematically to articulate and apply concepts because we are able to connect different concepts together in an impersonal representation of their different contents that expresses what they ought to represent for anyone.

In chapter four, I take up the relation of thought and judgment to the self-consciousness expressed in the proposition "I think." Here, I focus on the revised argument of the B-Deduction. The B-Deduction makes the connection between being a potential candidate for impersonal self-consciousness and being a potential candidate for judgment explicit in a way that is lacking in the A-Deduction. First, I note the importance of the proposition "I think" for cognitively relevant content. I note that contents of representation are cognitively relevant to us inasmuch as they can be thought by us. This means that contents of representation are cognitively significant for us insofar as they are potential candidates for judgment. I then develop Kant's argument that anything that can be thought by us has a relation to a possible self-consciousness "I think" in virtue of the enabling role of such self-consciousness in the formation of concepts and judgments.

Representations have relations to each other that are based on the identity and differences between the objects that they represent. The most crucial of these relations are ones that preserve the truth of a representation. Here, the truth of a representation consists in a representation representing its intended object as that object is independently

of that representation. Truth is particularly what is at issue when we make a judgment or claim. And truth is preserved between the contents of representations by means of logical relations. These logical relations constitute the most general conditions under which we can ascribe content to representations. These most general conditions for content ascription are the most abstract conceptual conditions governing the possibility of self-consciousness.

I argue that the key to an understanding of the intellectual pre-conditions on representation is the constitutive role that both personal (empirical) and impersonal (transcendental) consciousness of self play in our capacity to form concepts and articulate them in judgments. Anything that is to be a concept must be such that it is capable of articulating some content in a way that is in principle accessible to any one of us and, indeed, all of us. This capacity to represent things in a person-neutral way needs to be displayed in judgments that have a truth value that purports to be independent of the way a particular individual happens to respond to a particular situation. In judgments, we are able to use concepts to make objective claims that purport to be true not only for me or you, but for anyone.

Kant maintains that representations must be potential candidates for inclusion in a consciousness of oneself that potentially includes all possible representations; This universal self-consciousness is a possible although never actual co-consciousness of all of one's representations. One never actually surveys all of one's representations, much less all possible representations; instead one is able to represent their distinctive contents by connecting them according to rules that have an implicit reference back to oneself as subject of thought. This implicit self-reference is needed for rules constituting the cognitive significance of various contents, because representations have cognitive significance only to the extent that they are potential candidates for comparison and contrast by some subject. To be compared and contrasted by a subject they must present themselves to that subject, and, as such, they must be something for that subject. The demand that all representations be potential candidates for self-consciousness is the basis for a claim that all represented objects stand under the normative constraint of being potential objects of judgment. As objects of judgment that purport to have objective validity, represented objects may be regarded as objective. Even judgments concerning subjective states must have objective import; this leads to the problem of how to find a place for knowledge of subjective states.

In chapter five, I argue that Kant is forced to introduce a second step in the proof to explain how knowledge of even subjective states is possible. He first argues that our knowledge of objects is restricted to spatio-temporal objects. Then, he argues that even our inner states that are temporal depend on the existence of outer states that are spatial. The dependence of inner experience on outer experience allows him to argue that even our perceptions and other inner episodes are subject to the same necessary conditions to which intersubjectively available objects must be subject. This is because even our perceptions provide us with a way of representing the spatio-temporal world from a certain point of view only because they can be integrated into an impersonal and hence objective way of representing the spatio-temporal world for any arbitrary perceiver. The key here is to understand the manner in which not only empirical self-consciousness, but also representation in general, depend on transcendental self-consciousness and thus allow for judgments concerning even one's subjective states.

The argument that self-consciousness is a source of substantive constraints on experience depends on something more than the very general idea that we are capable of forming concepts and making judgments. Kant's argument for objectivity from the postulation of a non-empirical self-consciousness depends essentially on the assumption that we must represent the world temporally because this is constitutive of our very conception of what is internal to our own point of view. Non-empirical consciousness of self is introduced as an enabling condition of our necessary temporal representation of our experiences.

The idea that all experiences have a temporal structure must be linked to more general conceptual constraints on experience. First it must be seen that we are able to think of representations as being in time because we can order those representations in such a way that we can ascribe them to different individuals who have sets of experiences that constitute different temporal series. These different temporal series can only be compared and contrasted with each other to the extent that they may be regarded as belonging to a single shared time. This single shared time is the temporal form that different experiences have in virtue of belonging to one possible impersonal self-consciousness.

The only way we can account for the regularities in what we perceive is in terms of the assumption that what we are perceiving is connected to what we would perceive from a different spatio-temporal point of view according to laws. It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify any laws connecting sense perception to various kinds of objects. The laws in

question must therefore be laws governing the objects that we perceive independently of their being perceived. The problem here is that we have knowledge of the objects perceived only through our perceptions. Kant argues that this problem can be resolved once we realize that the laws governing the objects perceived and indeed governing our associations of different perceptions are nothing but the unifiability of different perceptions in an impersonal self-consciousness. This unifiability of perceptions in an impersonal self-consciousness is just the idea that different perceptions are connected in an individual consciousness in the same way that they ought to be connected in any consciousness that perceives or represents things as they are independently of that consciousness. The regularities in experience that present themselves to all of us as self-conscious beings reflect our ability to combine representations together in consciousness in a manner that is not unique to each individual. It is in virtue of such impersonal consciousness of self that we are able to form empirical concepts of the objects that we perceive and are then able to apply those concepts to what we perceive.

In chapter six, I discuss the theory of time-determination developed in the Analogies of Experience. It works out the implications of the idea adumbrated in the Deduction that the unity of space and time (as forms according to which we distinguish the outer from the inner) is a function of the systematic relations that the different spaces and times represented by different possible individuals have to a possible self-consciousness. Kant's general idea that spatio-temporal representations must make a differential contribution to consciousness if they are to belong to the experiences of a self-conscious being is the basis for the general assumption of the Analogies that times and spaces must be empirically distinguishable. In the First Analogy, Kant defends the need to postulate sempiternal substances as the basis for recognizing changes in objects of experience. These substances underwrite our ability to ascribe a determinate position in time and space to representations and objects represented by us. For we have knowledge of positions in time and space only through differences that can be made out in what we experience. These differences manifest themselves temporally in the differences between events. Kant argues that these differences between events are to be interpreted as changes in the states of things. He can claim that all changes must be recognizable in experience on the basis of his robust theory of transcendental idealism. For this robust theory of transcendental idealism does not allow for radically mind-independent and hence recognition-independent events. Even without this strong version

of transcendental idealism, a case can be made for the need to presuppose persistent substances if changes are to be recognizable. However, it cannot be demonstrated that events must be recognizable except insofar as they are to be objects of our experience.

Kant's defense of the general causal principle is based on the idea that the temporal order of episodes in any change must be empirically determinable. It thus builds on the necessity of the recognizability of change argued for in the First Analogy on the basis of the principle that empirical representations must make a determinable difference to experience if they are to be potential candidates for self-consciousness. While Kant rejects the causal theory of time when it is understood to reduce the meaning of temporal terms to causal relations, he argues that causation allows one to determine which of two events occurred earlier and which occurred later.

In chapter seven, I discuss the relation of the general causal principle and the general principle that there must be substances and interactions in experience, to our capacity to formulate specific laws governing causation, interaction, and individual things. The only way we can know that a specific change from event-type A to event-type B has occurred and thus that A must precede B is if this change follows in a lawlike fashion upon some other event type of which we have knowledge. Such lawlike succession is just what we mean by causal connection. Interactions between substances are the basis for our knowledge of simultaneity relations between those substances. By being able to determine the temporal order of what is represented by us, we are able to give empirical content to distinctions between different spatial and temporal points of view. At the same time, we are able to connect anything that is represented by us together with anything else that is represented by us in a single consciousness of the temporal unity and the differences of empirical points of view. Kant seems to think that causation and interaction can only assign determinate temporal positions to objects and events if they are capable of providing sufficient conditions for change. However, he allows for indeterministic causal laws at the level of human action, and, in the light of current fundamental physical theory, it seems more plausible to weaken this assumption so that probabilistic laws governing causal connections and interactions become possible at the level of fundamental natural processes. In the concluding sections of the chapter, I argue that Kant's account of causal laws is compatible with free action. The application of causal laws is governed by causal conditions that we assume to comprise a complete

set for the regulative purposes of inquiry. However, the important point to see is that we never are in fact capable, even in principle, of identifying a complete set of such causal conditions. This always leaves space for an alternative account of human action under action descriptions that are independent of actual causal conditions.

After discussing the general relation of substance, cause, and interaction to particular kinds of substances, causes, and interactions in chapter seven, I turn in chapter eight to the temptation to think of the self as a thinking thing that is a substance endowed with personal identity over all time. This temptation or “transcendental illusion,” as Kant calls it, is rooted in the nature of our access to the self from the first-person point of view. Because I thoughts are self-verifying thoughts, and because we have access to other rational beings by thinking of them as if we were in their place as I thinkers, we become tempted to think that the first-person point of view of self-consciousness is capable of communicating substantive truths about the nature of thinking beings in general. In chapter nine, I look at how this essentially first-person access to rational beings encourages us to think of ourselves as substances that are independent of material objects and knowable in a more certain way than things that exist outside of us.

In chapter ten, I discuss Kant’s refutation of idealism which is a revised version of his critique of the kind of epistemic dualism that takes our knowledge of our inner states to be more certain than our knowledge of outer states. Kant maintains that at least some of the objects that we directly experience must be outside of us in space. He attempts to establish this claim by means of an argument showing that determinate consciousness of one’s own inner experience is only possible if there are actual outer objects. The argument thus establishes a necessary link between what can be regarded as internal to the point of view of a particular self-conscious being and what can be regarded as external to the point of view of a particular self-conscious being.

The argument against the kind of skepticism about the existence of the external world that Descartes articulates in his First Meditation is based on the general thesis that one cannot ascribe determinate beliefs to oneself without being able to order those beliefs in a determinate temporal order. It is then argued that one cannot ascribe a determinate temporal order to one’s beliefs without some direct consciousness of something that is not inherently successive. One’s occurrent beliefs and desires are inherently successive. They pick out different nows of awareness due to their character as different occurrent states of awareness. I

maintain that Kant needs to be taken at his word that any determinate consciousness of oneself requires an immediate relation to something outside of that self-consciousness. I contend that the argument against “psychological” idealism has force against the Cartesian skeptic who already accepts the possibility of self-knowledge.

The refutation is not complete until it addresses the manner in which our beliefs depend on not only objects that are outside of us in the empirical, but also things in themselves that are outside of us in the sense of being completely independent of our minds. This ultimately leads Kant to raise the issue of transcendental idealism in coming to terms with the problem of how to refute idealism.

I take up transcendental idealism in chapter eleven. Transcendental idealism is the thesis that the only objects of which we can have substantive representations are objects as they must appear to us according to our a priori forms of sensibility. Sensible pre-conditions on experience restrict our experience to objects as they must appear to us, rather than allowing us access to things as they are independently of the way we must represent them as internal to, or external to, our point of view. I argue that Kant vacillates between a modest version of transcendental idealism according to which we cannot resolve the question of what the ultimate nature is of objects that are independent of the pre-conditions that we bring to experience, and a more ambitious claim that objects as they are independently of our experience cannot be spatial or temporal at all. Only the former idealism seems to me to be defensible. In relating Kant’s argument for transcendental idealism to his argument against empirical or psychological idealism, I discuss some of Kant’s personal notes (his so-called “reflections”) which I try to handle with care, since they cannot claim the same authority as the material that he chose to publish. I conclude with a discussion of the general account of experience implied by my reconstruction.